

VZCZCXRO3874  
OO RUEHAG  
DE RUEHDM #2064/01 1241034  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 041034Z MAY 06  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8751  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0031

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 002064

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

PARIS FOR ZEYA, LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/01/2016

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION FOCUSING ON EXTERNAL PROJECTS WHILE  
AWAITING BRAMMERTZ

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4(b)/(d)  
)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: While domestic civil-society activity has slowed in the wake of security service crackdowns and in anticipation of the June 15 Brammertz report, post contacts indicate that the opposition is now focused on a number of external projects. On a regional level, the Damascus-Beirut Declaration, a nine-point statement drafted by Syrian opposition figures and unidentified Lebanese civil society figures, is expected to be published in coming days. Opposition contacts also mention a number of upcoming conferences in Spain, as well as a May 12 Syrian opposition summit in Budapest. Meanwhile, the SARG has reinforced a number of its "red lines" for the internal opposition by arresting activist Fateh Jammous, head of the Action Communist Party, upon his return from Europe. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) POST-CRACKDOWN, PRE-BRAMMERTZ BLUES?: Recent meetings with Syrian civil society figures indicate that the opposition remains intimidated by the intense security crackdown of the last three months, leaving its members looking towards the June 15 UNIIIC report to the UNSC. Researcher and human rights activist Radwan Zyadeh told Poloff on May 1 that the Damascus Declaration group plans to hold off on any major initiatives until after June 15. In the meantime, the human rights community appears to be dividing its time between campaigning on behalf of disappeared activist Ali al-Abdullah and slugging out personality conflicts via press statements and newspaper articles (septel).

¶3. (C) DAMASCUS-BEIRUT DECLARATION TO COMMENT ON SYRIAN-LEBANESE RELATIONS, US POLICY IN REGION: Zyadeh also noted that the public release of a "Damascus-Beirut Declaration" is expected in coming days. According to Zyadeh, this new declaration is a product of cooperation between the Damascus Declaration Group and unidentified Lebanese civil society figures. The nine-point declaration will include commentary on Syrian-Lebanese relations, the Hariri assassination, the treatment of Syrian workers in Lebanon, U.S. policy in Iraq, and Syria-U.S. relations. According to Zyadeh, the declaration already has many signatories and the campaign for more signatures will continue over a three-month period.

¶4. (C) UPCOMING CONFERENCES, OPPOSITION SUMMIT IN EUROPE TO OFFER DISCUSSION SPACE: Syrian civil society figures will also be traveling to Europe throughout May to participate in a variety of conferences on human rights. A closed-door May 10 conference in Spain at the Centro Internacional de Toledo Para La Paz will serve as a platform for discussion between civil society activists like Zyadeh,

Daad Mousa, Suheir al-Atassi, and Aktham Naisse, and European- and U.S.-based Syrian opposition figures on civil society and NGO issues. Zyadeh, Naisse, and human rights lawyer Danial Saud will later participate in the General Assembly of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network on May 12 in Madrid. Zyadeh noted the importance of Syrian participation in the event, particularly as rumors circulate that the EU may be considering returning to the bargaining table on its stalled Association Agreement with Syria. Human rights activist Ammar Qurrabi told Poloff on May 1 that a Syrian opposition summit will be held in Budapest on May 12, convening opposition figures from Syria, Europe, and the U.S.

Meanwhile, Riad Seif conveyed to Poloff via messenger that he wishes to attend the Syrian-American Congress (SAC) set for May 20 in Chicago, but does not expect to be granted a passport by the SARG before that date. Zyadeh, despite sharp questioning by the Political Security Directorate about whether the SAC is a conference or political congress, plans to attend.

15. (C) SARG AUTHORITIES ARREST ACTIVIST UPON RETURN FROM EUROPE: Meanwhile, the SARG continues to selectively enforce its "red line" against opposition figures holding meetings abroad, participating in international conferences, and speaking with the foreign media by arresting Alawite opposition activist Fateh Jammous on April 30 at the Damascus Airport upon his return to the country. According to a press release by the National Organization for Human Rights (NOHR) Jammous had been holding meetings in Europe over the last six weeks. According to human rights activist Anwar al-Bunni, Jammous met with representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood as part of his trip. Jammous also appeared on a number of broadcasts on al-Jazeera Live Channel, and gave interviews to Radio Monte Carlo and to the London-based newspaper al-Quds al-Arabi. Bunni added that Jammous was in State Security

DAMASCUS 00002064 002 OF 002

custody and expected him to be released within the next several days, a sentiment echoed by NOHR president Qurrabi. (NOTE: The line is more pink than red in many cases, with the SARG detaining people for a few days-- or summoning them-- upon their return to question them in detail about what was said (and who said it) at the meetings/conferences abroad. Jammous may end up detained longer than Bunni and others think because of the MB meeting. END NOTE.)

SECHE